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Donald Stanley's Book Corner

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'Smilin' Jack' Clifford

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Today's guest reviewer is Examiner staffer George Murphy, a former student of Father Clifford at Santa Clara.

IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES. By John W. Clifford, S. J. W. W. Norton Co.; 239 pages; \$4.50.

WHEN THE REVEREND John W. Clifford, S. J., was an instructor and dormitory prefect at the University of Santa Clara some years ago, he gained a nickname. We called him affectionately (and, it must be admitted, somewhat irreverently) "Smilin' Jack."

He was husky, healthy, happy—and brilliant. He was short, stocky, smiling, and tolerant of the peccadilloes of sophomores. He had a healthy shock of brown hair, clear eyes, a probing mind and a quiet, understated, but always extant strength of belief in his God and in his chosen way of life.

When I saw Smilin' Jack again, late in 1956, the smile was somewhat slower to bloom, the hair had become white, and the clear, piercing eyes looked out from behind steel-rimmed glasses. He was a tired man.

He had spent three arduous, unbelievable years as a prisoner of the Chinese Communists—and beat them at their own game.

In this book, John Clifford tells the story of how he did it. His publisher says on the dust jacket that "this is a primer on resistance to brainwashing." And that's pretty much what it is.

Father Clifford, a San Franciscan (his brother, Harry, is with the FBI office here), tells of his arrest and, without trial, his imprisonment, and the splendid Machiavellian subtleties of the Communist method of "hsi-nao" which means "wash the brain."

How he was helped—such as in the

"vitamins" sent in a Red Cross package from the "Domini Corporation, Los Gatos, California"—is worthy of any CIA cloak-and-dagger story. The Domini Corp. is, in fact, the Jesuit seminary at Los Gatos, and the "vitamins" were smuggled Communion wafers, allowing Father Clifford to say Mass while in prison.)

How he analyzes the hsi-nao process is a valuable psychological document. Smilin' Jack has, in short, written himself a pretty fine book, one that can be read with interest by many and varied members of our society.

And there's an epilogue the book doesn't tell, but which is characteristic of the author:

After the three harrowing years in the Chinese prisons, he was released (even on the last day, he refused to sign release papers and the Communists literally threw him out of prison in frustration) and came back to San Francisco to rest.

In 1958 he got on a ship and headed for Formosa, just across the straits from his former prison. In Taipei he is now a professor of philosophy at the National Taiwan University and the Provincial Normal University.

When he was getting on the boat, that day in 1958, somebody said: "Father, why are you going back to the Orient?"

The gray-haired, bespectacled priest became for that moment the Smilin' Jack of Santa Clara days, and the smile was quick. He said, as though it were just a simple thing: "It's my job."